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ABSTRACT

Findings are reported from a study that investigated the influence of a two-year cooperative masters of education program as a vehicle for professional development and school renewal. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used to collect data from 25 experienced teachers based in 3 secondary and 2 elementary professional development schools (PDSs). The dominant theme to emerge from the data was the impact of the cooperative program on teachers as sustained change agents; this theme played itself out in four major areas of participants' lives: teachers' beliefs and roles, the classroom, the school, and the development of a community of learners. There was a continuous emphasis on inquiry throughout the program, during which teachers conducted year-long research projects. Respondents linked their practice of sustained inquiry to increases in confidence levels, role changes, and increased activism. A majority of respondents indicated that the program changed their teaching practices, that change continued after they completed the program, and that these changes were also linked to the experience of conducting an action research inquiry project. The program also stimulated teachers to give more choice and voice to their own students. While individual action research projects and other aspects of the program positively impacted some schools and influenced school change efforts at several sites, some teachers reported little or no school change. The program's contribution to developing a community of learners at various sites is also discussed. (Contains 25 references.) (IAH)

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ED 399 223

Masters Cooperative Program: An Alternative Model of Teacher Development in PDS Sites

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Introduction

Recent recommendations for reform in education have focused on university-school partnerships (e.g., Carnegie Foundation, 1986; Goodlad, 1990; Holmes, 1990; 1995) for renewing schools and improving teacher education. The PDS has received much attention (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1994, Holmes, 1995) and proponents assert "professional development schools are linchpins in the movement to restructure education . . . " (Darling-Hammond, 1994, pp.9). While there are considerable variations among the hundreds of PDS projects initiated throughout the world, researchers (Abdal-Haqq, 1995; Holmes, 1986; 1990; Goodlad, 1993) have identified several core characteristics, including four general aims: (1) to upgrade preservice teacher education, (2) to improving professional development for experienced teachers, and (3) to create field-base research and inquiry; and (4) to restructure schools.

Although researchers have centered much of their attention on the aims of improving preservice teacher education (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1994; Goodlad, 1993), they have given little attention to developing effective strategies for teachers' professional development in PDS settings. Often, the thrust of experienced teachers' education in a PDS comes through their interaction with interns or student teachers as they mentor and share their experiences as classroom teachers (Ross, 1995). While this form of teacher development is important, it is limited and unlikely to produce reflective practitioners capable of shaping and promoting school restructuring advocated by PDS supporters (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1993; Holmes, 1995, Little, 1993). Neither are the typical "inservice" activities sponsored by universities and district staff development offices equal to the task (Gitlin & Margonis, 1995). Steeped in the traditional mode

of teacher education, inservice usually emphasizes skill training and packaged programs of staff development. Training is not the aim of education. Absent from "inservice" education in a PDS is what Giroux (1985) calls the "teacher as intellectual"; instead the model is "teacher as technician" (Little, 1993). In sum, Warren Little (1993) argues "the dominant training model of professional development . . . is not adequate to the ambitious visions of teaching and school reform embedded in the present reform initiatives" (p.129).

Emerging from the recent teacher education literature is a growing body of research emphasing "systematic and intentional inquiry carried out by teachers" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 9) as the centerpiece of professional development. Although the teacher education literature has begun to acknowledge the significance of this approach to teacher development, especially through action research, surprisingly little is known about its effectiveness within the professional development schools context.

One promising avenue of study for understanding links involving the PDS context, action research, and teacher development comes from the emerging research on communities of learners (e.g., Hobbs, 1995; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1994). While acknowledging the creation of learning communities for teachers is an important means for enhancing teacher growth and school change (e.g., Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993), little is known about how such communities are created, the extended life of the communities, and the impact of communities among teachers in restructuring schools.

Given the need to further understand the conditions that facilitate successful development of communities of learners, and their relationships to school improvement efforts in a PDS, this study was investigated the salient features of a formal two-year Masters Cooperative Program

designed to develop a community of inquiry-oriented teachers embedded in the PDS work at five schools. Guiding the study were three major questions; 1) What were the influences of the two-year program on the development of a community of learners among the participant teachers within the program and within the schools?, 2) How did the two-year program fluence teacher growth and school change? and 3) What aspects of the two-year program that were most salient in the development of communities, teacher growth, and school change?

A Brief History of the Masters Cooperative Program (Co-op). In 1984, the University of Utah developed a unique Masters of Education program for experienced teachers called a "Masters of Education Cooperative Program." The two major goals for the program were to provide: 1) a quality M.Ed. program for participants and 2) a research arena for teacher growth and development through a university-district cooperatively sponsored professional development program (Dept. of Educational Studies, 1987). The two-year Co-op Program was taught on-site in the schools. Each Co-op group consisted of approximately 20-25 candidates and a university professor who serves as a Co-op Leader. The Co-op Leader is responsible for: 1) teaching one course per term through the 2-year period, 2) chairing each candidate's graduate committee, and 3) program administration duties (e.g., quarterly class registration, planning and coordinating classes, informal advising). Two graduate courses are taught each university quarter at a designated school site convenient to the school participants. The Co-op group takes these classes together. Additionally, the candidates take between 9-12 credit hours on the university campus during the two corresponding summer quarters.

In 1987, the University of Utah along with two local school districts identified seven Professional Development Schools, including three secondary schools. Initially, the university

provided "inservice" classes to the schools largely based upon available university resources. However, the inservice courses were ineffective in capturing the classroom teachers' interests and involving professors in PDS sites. By 1989, some university professors believed that the Co-op program could be used as a method for achieving professional development among the teachers at the university's PDS sites. In 1990, the university professors had recruited teachers from four PDS sites in one school district to create the first PDS Co-op group. A little over one year later, in the fall of 1991, university administrators established a second PDS Co-op at the request of the high school faculty in another school district.

The theme for each Co-op was inquiry into practice, around which the program was built. Although each Co-op followed the same general curricular structure, a different Co-op Leader headed each group. See Attachment 1 for an example of a program outline.

Methods

This study was part of a larger study of seven PDS sites (Bullough, Kauchak, Crow, Hobbs, & Stokes, 1996). A representative sampling of teachers and administrators were interviewed for the purposes of understanding the PDS site development well as the influence of the university-school collaborative efforts on a variety of variables including teacher growth, school change, K-12 pupil learning, preservice teacher education, and school culture. The findings from this larger study were presented in seven case studies that identified major themes and issues surrounding the establishment and maintenance of PDS sites.

One of the intriguing results that emerged from the initial study was the positive influence of the university's Masters Cooperative Program (Co-op) on teacher growth and school

change. A persistent theme from the first study ". . .was the effectiveness of the masters programs in bringing about teacher change and setting the stage for institutional change" (Bullough et al., 1996, p. 50).

Using the findings from the Bullough et al., (1996) study, the research team decided to design further research into the Co-op experience in the PDS sites. The team argued that the data from the initial study were incomplete because only 7 of the study's 39 interviewees had participated in the Co-op program. Furthermore, the team believed the proposed study would provide rich possibilities for developing a deeper understanding of teacher growth and school change as well as investigating salient program elements contributing those changes.

Study Design and Analysis. The present Co-op/PDS study had two phases. This paper discusses Phase I. The Phase I portion of the study utilized two primary methods for qualitative research: semi-structured interviews and questionnaires (Miles and Huberman, 1984). The sample consisted of 25 teachers, from two different Co-op groups, who had participated in the two-year on-site Master's program from 1990-1993. The participants, located in three secondary schools and two elementary schools, were sent questionnaires for the purpose of identifying the major program elements and conceptual themes. Phase I data will guide the team's future efforts in designing Phase II emphasis on interview data.

Analyses of data for Phase I were based on methods associated with the qualititative approach in which theory generated from a study is first grounded in the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Independently, five team members read the interview transcripts, and through a process of 'constant comparative' (e.g. Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Miles and Huberman, 1984) identified initial categories for analysis. From these categories a matrix was developed that sought to

identify relationships and themes. Two team members re-read the questionnaires and interviews and coded the data according to the matrix to ensure reader reliability. It should be noted that team members actively looked for non-examples of matrix categories and themes.

Setting and Sample. Over the course of almost four years, two Master Cooperative groups were organized to serve the needs of teachers at the several PDS sites in two districts. From 1990-1991, Co-op One was composed of 20 teachers primarily from two elementary and two secondary PDS sites in the Granite School District, the largest school district in the state. The Co-op Leader for this group was a university professor who had also been previously involved in preservice teacher education at the two secondary schools. Co-op Two was created in 1991 in the Salt Lake School District. Although this Co-op was initiated by a group of seven secondary education teachers, the Co-op came to include other teachers from within the school district but outside of the district's other PDS sites. Similar to Co-op One, the Leader of the second Co-op was also involved in the preservice teacher education program at the Salt Lake City high school. Twenty-five of the 27 Co-op participants from both Co-op groups were surveyed for Phase I of the study. See Attachment II for further information.

Findings

Teachers as sustained change agents was the most dominant theme emerging from the study's data. The influence of Co-op on the teachers seemed to be immediate, and for many teachers, their new roles as change agents were sustained throughout the years following completion of the Co-op. This theme played itself out in four major arenas of the participants' lives, including: 1) teachers' beliefs and roles, 2) the classroom, 3) the school, and 4) the

development of a community of learners. This section of the paper is sub-divided along these four major areas.

Changing Teachers' Perceptions and Roles

Many respondents specifically stated the Co-op changed their views of themselves as teachers while they were still participating as students in the Co-op. The teachers noted changes in their level of confidence to state and defend their beliefs among colleagues, administrators, and parents. The sense of "voice" described by the participants was multi-faceted and integrated with actions in the classroom, school, and Co-op. The participants became "more vocal . . . a real decent sense of empowerment" in school faculty meetings and their level of confidence propelled many normally shy and conforming teachers to lead out among their colleagues in the school settings. "I took greater part in restructuring activities than I otherwise might have . . . it also led to my participation on a committee for providing training to future [cooperating teachers]. . . ." (iv) The participation stimulated a new sense of self-worth which was evident across the grade levels. For instance, an elementary teacher stated "as I was working with the Masters Co-op, our school was participating in a restructuring project. I became more involved in . . . the curriculum projects with other teachers . . . ." (xxiv) Changes in how teachers saw themselves outside of the classroom and within the school community were evident to many former Co-op students. "Our school changed because we learned we had a voice and could be empowered." (xii)

Another teacher from this same elementary school also noted the increased confidence among the Co-op teachers began to influence others teachers in the school's culture, "as we gained more confidence in speaking out, others have also started to express their opinions more." (xx, 2) But the changes in confidence and activism in the school community did not come

without conflict nor tension. Especially because Co-op participants were clustered in PDS sites, the teachers' voices formed a new and sometimes threatening "chorus". One elementary teacher described the influence of having six Co-op teachers on the same faculty:

> . . . there was a big change in the 'voice' of our staff. Teaches in the Co-op gained more confidence in their own value. Members of the Co-op pushed for more [school] change, and asked more questions. Sometimes, this added feistiness brought more conflict between teachers and conflict between administration and staff. (xvii)

Changes in teachers' perceptions and roles within in the school community were also noted. "I've become reflective about my "teacher as learner' role. In fact, I'm constantly redefining my role. Previously, . . . I would defer to so-called experts to interpret what my worth might be. Now, I am more cognizant of expertise, I have the ability to interpret what is appropriate . . . ." (xxiii) Years after completing the Co-op program, many teachers continued to believed their participation in the program made them more confident. One former student remarked, "I have greater confidence in my ability to make good choices in and around the curriculum." (i) Fours years after completing the program, another respondent wrote about what she had learned, "empowerment . . . the importance of having a 'voice' and standing up for what [I] believed in. This has remained with me since [the Co-op]." (xxv) Several former Co-op participants' responses revealed that their sense of voice was an active one in which they perceived themselves as capable teachers able to make differences in their school settings. Typical of the respondents' comments about connection of voice and activism, this teacher with 25 years of experience reported, "[I] recognize that I have a voice I can choose to use that voice to further ideas." (v,2).

Many of the study's respondents were clear about those aspects of the Co-op that had influenced changes in their role perceptions towards becoming change agents in the classroom and within the school. First, both Co-ops leaders began their two-year programs by engaging participants in a study and understanding of their beliefs about their roles as teachers, their perceptions of being a professional and the profession, and values associated with their teaching practices. During the next quarter of the program, the participants widened their inquiry into the larger context of studying school culture and history. These two quarters of inquiry activities were important to many of the students, including this secondary education teacher of 17 years, "The voice unit was very powerful because I suddenly realized I could have some power in the system. As a result, I have implemented some units into my curriculum like problem-based learning . . . I am serving on several committees on the district and school level." (iii) A teacher with 26 years experience also wrote about the effeet of examining beliefs and practices, the Co-op "forced us to examine what we had long projected perhaps unconsciously, about our attitudes toward education by the methods we employed." (vii,2). The exploration of personal and professional beliefs and teaching practices helped teachers not only realize where they were at the moment, but "what I want to become." (v,2)

A second program element singled out for encouraging changes in teachers' roles towards their involvement as change agents focused on the program's use of the educational literature and the students involvement in the inquiry process. The emphasis upon inquiry was continuous throughout the program and stimulated teachers to study their own teaching practices and those of the schools. Each teacher conducted a year long research project. Beginning with a research question developed during a research methods course taken during the third quarter of the

program, the teacher's used their summer quarter to probe the educational literature and develop a suitable outline from which they wrote an extensive review of literature during the autumn quarter. The next winter and spring quarters were spent in designing and implementing their inquiry projects. During the last spring quarter of their programs, the teachers' analysis and write-ups of their findings were shared with their wider school audiences.

The impact of sustained practice of inquiry was important as many participants in both Co-ops linked the increases in their confidence levels, changes in teacher roles and increased activism in the school to having examined their own professional beliefs and the contexts in which they taught. "I really think the personal research had the greatest impact on me because that is what made me realize I am a teacher/researcher and would want to continue that." (xx). Not only were teachers able to note changes in their own thinking and actions, many teachers readily identified changes in their fellow teachers and Co-op participants. Acknowledging the sustained change in confidence in and the subsequent consequences, one high school teacher four years after completing the program remarked, "I've recognized teachers have become more pro-active in initiating change because of newly discovered faith in their own abilities." (xxiii)

Classrooms

The theme of teachers as sustained change agents was also evident as teachers wrote about their classrooms and teaching practices. When responding to the survey's question about the influence of the Co-op on participants, 15 of respondents stated that their teaching practices had changed and continued to change after completing the programs. Typical of the comments was this statement from a seven year veteran elementary teacher, "I learned a lot more of what was current and after the Co-op was over, I researched a lot and changed my teaching style." (xx)

As with changes in teachers views of roles and increased confidence levels, perceived changes in teaching practices occurred across grade levels, years of experience and two Co-op groups. A high school English teacher of 25 years well represents the group: "I learned so much and most of it was recent research that led to classroom practice. I have changed the way I teach entirely and the best thing is that it all makes sense to me." (iii)

While a few teachers simply stated that the Co-op experience had ". . . influenced my classroom practice . . ." (xix), many of the teachers PDS sites noted specific changes in curricula. Several wrote about the incorporation of cooperative learning into classrooms; particularly in one Co-op which included a class on cooperative learning. "Cooperative learning- a term I could not have accurately defined prior to my Co-op experience has become a staple of my classroom . . . I have developed a whole curriculum around the use of team skills." (vi) While the class was important in changing teaching practices, the respondents also reported changes in their classroom teaching because of specific Co-op program elements. For example, a veteran teacher of 21 years, from another Co-op and high school also wrote about curricular changes:

> The teacher inquiry project became extremely influential and powerful for me as I studied alternative teaching methods like cooperative learning and implemented them. Cooperative learning and portfolio assessment . . . have changed the way I teach. I'm currently studying alternative and authentic assessment and am planning to make more changes in my teaching.(xxiv)

The importance of personal research projects in effecting teachers' classroom practices was evident. "I implemented the ideas I developed in my project." (xxi) It appears that having teachers conduct an action research inquiry project on a topic of intense interest to them was a powerful means of encouraging sustained changes in teaching practices. Having teachers study their own practices and examine their beliefs also served to be a powerful model of teaching.

However, an elementary teacher was critical of the Co-op's research orientation:

> . . . if you truly want to make me a better teacher, give me practical, hands-on and useful things . . . . The program by far [was] too much research oriented. I spent hours researching professional magazines and writing research papers when my time could have been better spent creating clever curriculum materials to use in my class. Not a thing I did with research helped me be a better teacher. (xv)

The influence of the two Co-ops curricular organization around research and inquiry along with the use of student-centered instructional strategies allowed teachers to view and participate in alternative models of teaching. Several teachers commented on this influence. For example, a high school teacher reported: "There was always a sense of adventure and a real zest for exploration shown by the University personnel. Many were able to model as they taught, a powerful and inspiring example. Because of the support for risk taking, it was easier to try our different approaches . . . ."(vii,2) And, from another veteran elementary teacher of 24 years:

> [the instructors] took time to write all over our papers little notes and give questions to help us. I remember getting several back covered with little phrases like "say more" or "why?" [One professor] would even copy off papers and give to us as additional reading material to help us follow our train of thought. I was so surprised because I really don't feel that most teachers read their students' work. Now I find myself writing those same comments on my students' papers when they have creative writing or reports due. I feel that the children need to know that I do read their work and want to help them improve.(xvi)

Remarkably, Co-op teachers commented how their classrooms had become more democratic and student friendly as a result of their Co-op participation:

> It was much easier for me to do research and work in an area in which I was interested. This also reminded me that this is true of students. I try much harder to allow students an opportunity to research their own topics. Some professors allowed myself and others an opportunity to redo a paper. This was much appreciated since I was striving to grow and improve. In my classroom I encourage students to redo their work to get a better grade and more satisfaction. This isn't always easy to do since it takes more time on my part and theirs.(xvii)

It appears that having teachers take on the role of "student" for a sustained period of time was also a perspective shaping element. Writing about her Co-op experience, one teacher explained, "it helped me to re-examine my classroom from both teacher [and] student perspective - [it] made me a more reflective teacher . . . ."(ii) Several teachers described their curricula and classrooms as much more student-centered. Again, the elementary teacher of 24 years described the changes that had occurred four years after completing her Co-op experience:

> [it] forced me to re-evaluate my philosophies and choices which I made as a teacher . . . I am making the units more "child oriented." I try to give the children "across the curriculum" choices whenever possible. I appreciated the chance to choose and have a voice when I was in the program, so I give the students choices. For example, they might be able to write a report or do a skit or a play for a project. This gives them some freedom and allows them to do the work in [the] way [in] which they might feel more comfortable. (xvi)

The comments from another very experienced elementary teacher in the same school captured the influence of the Co-op's curricular and instructional orientation on it participants, "I try to give [students] different educational experiences for their learning rather than straight readings or written assignments. I try to give them some choices and a voice." (xvii)

However, the feelings about influence of the Co-op on participants' teaching practices was not shared by all members in the Co-op. Two former students were particularly candid, one junior high teacher commented, "The college classroom material [was] basically irrelevant. Help us to teach not help us to be able to philosophize about it." (xi). Another teacher stated:

> . . . if you truly want to make me a better teacher, give me practical, hands-on and useful things to take back to my class to use on my students. The program [was] by far too much research oriented. I spent hours researching . . . when my time could have been better spent creating clever curriculum materials to use in my class. Not a thing I did with research helped me be a better teacher. (xv)

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School Change

The idea of teachers as change agents at the school level was evident in the data in three critical ways; 1) participation in the Co-op stimulated teachers to exert leadership and champion school reform in their PDS sites, 2) teachers' involvement in the program's action research projects influenced the curriculum and school organization, and 3) school change was influenced by the support system development in the Co-op and transferred to the school sites.

Leadership. Several teachers' responses revealed new roles of teacher involving leadership and community problem-solver. This sense of teacher as problem-solver within the culture of the school was also evident at a high school associated with the second Co-op. One veteran teacher remarked:

> Because of the Masters Co-op, a cross discipline respect has grown with a spirit of cooperation. While the ties that bound us in the Co-op are not as strong, the respect that developed has continued to have an impact on the moral of the school. We are less likely to be the finger pointers and more likely be the authors of the solutions. (v)

The findings are not conclusive about the exact catalyst within the program that encouraged many teachers to become active change agents within their schools to take leadership, but many former Co-op students provide significant clues. For example, participation in the Co-op activities of self-examination of values, school culture, and teaching practices apparently forged confident leaders within the school faculties. "This 'voice' has also been heard at my school where I work. Those who participated in the Co-op are usually those who are the leaders and 'shakers' at my school I don't think that anyone could ever take away our voice." (xvi,2)

Additionally, respondents reported that their fellow Co-op participants were considered

among the leaders in the schools. One teacher noted, "I find that members of the Co-op are usually those at our school who are in a leadership position. They are usually willing to work on important committees and are knowledgeable about what is happening in education today." (xvii,2). Armed with new found knowledge and skills borne out of intensive study and work in the inquiry process, a secondary education teacher pointed to the influence of the teacher research on overall school change efforts, "The Co-op has influenced the whole school. Yes, we wouldn't have any reforms at all if we hadn't had some teachers reading current research." (ii) Teachers also believed that their participation in the Co-op helped other members of their faculty view them with added respect, "The most powerful aspect of the Co-op was the respect that the faculty as a whole showed to the members of the Co-op. It was clear throughout the two years that what we were studying and the new ideas and practices that we were sharing at school were influencing other teachers across the curriculum." (vii)

Curriculum and School Organization. Individual action research projects impacted the schools positively. A veteran secondary education teacher remarked: "I helped to influence and implement systemic change within my department." (ii). Another teacher in that same school and department commented, "Even though it seemed like a lot of work at the time, the research I did [with my colleague] was a learning experience. The findings motivated us to recommend a detracted [school within a school] ninth grade English curricula. We charted the plan and implemented it. It has been in place for three years and just gets better." (iii) While changes were evident on the department and school levels, the influence of the Co-op as a change agent in the community was important for one teacher, "[school] community as a whole was also affected to a degree; PTSA began a recruiting campaign aimed at traditionally disenfranchised groups and

actually set up training sessions for poor and minority parents to teach them to use school resources better and to become more involved in their students' education." (vii)

New School Culture. Many teachers developed support systems, skills, and knowledge that influenced their participation in the PDS sites. The notion of teachers as change agents was closely tied to the sense of community developed in the Co-op and the participants carried this sense of belonging back into particular school sites. "The teachers from this school still have a strong bond, where we share ideas, information, and problems; we seek to find solutions as a group rather that as individuals."(xix)

The collegial teacher relationships developed in the Co-op influenced several school's curriculum. At one elementary PDS site, a teacher noted, "our reading program became almost totally whole language because our Co-op group . . . worked together to get real books back into the reading curriculum." (xii) While at another elementary PDS site in that same district, a fifth grade teacher reported, "[our school] changed from a basal oriented school to a more whole language oriented school because of research being done by fellow Co-op members." (xviii)

The influence of Co-op participation on the spirit and efforts of teacher collaboration also triggered several grant writing events that resulted in curricular and school changes. For example, during the program, three teachers working together at the fifth grade level in one school obtained a small grant. One of the teachers explained:

> While [we] were interviewing people . . . for our literature review, we learned about several art grants. Joan wrote a proposal and we received an additional $9,000.00 in art grant funds over the past three years. Joan and I have administered the program which has given inservice to all the faculty. This has resulted in the faculty changing their art lessons from "artsie-craftsie" type lesson to "art concept" lessons. (xvi,3)

After the Co-op was completed, several teachers continued to work in collaborative ways and used their research skills effect further school changes, wrote one teacher:

> . . . members of the Co-op [became] good writers [and] wrote [the] Centennial School proposal while our principal was away from school on his honeymoon. By the time he returned, a group of teachers had finished the proposal and had it ready for his signature. [Our school] received about $40,000.00 from this program. The teacher continues to describe the leadership exerted by the former Co-op members, A member of the Co-op . . . headed the Centennial Committee and administered the program at our school with several other committee members also acted on the Centennial Board. (xvi)

Summarizing the continued influence of the experience, a teacher reported, "I don't think that we would have been prepared to write these grants without the Co-op experience. I still see members of our Co-op working together and referring to their experience."

While there was evidence of school change in several sites the pattern was not consistent among all PDS sites. Indeed, the pattern of change ran the continuum from significant school change to little evidence. For instance, teachers from the junior high school PDS site provided no evidence of any school change. Indeed one of these respondents noted, "I've not heard much from the teachers an my school about the program . . . so I suppose the influence, if there is [some], is hidden" (vi).

While there was strong evidence of change at one elementary school, the responses from the teachers associated with another elementary PDS indicated the changes were more limited, ". . . our reading program became almost totally whole language because our Co-op group [except one member of the Co-op] worked together to get real books back into the reading curriculum."(xii) Finally, while all of the respondents from one high school believed that significant institutional change had occurred as a result of their association with the Co-op, the

former Co-op members from another high school were inconsistent in their perceptions of school change. One veteran teacher of the high school reported, "It has had a definite influence on the way those of us . . . who went through the program together relate to each other. This in turn has influenced the way we relate to other colleagues . . . a school based inservice program was partially inspired by the group." (xxii) However, another teacher from this high school reported a different scenario based on her experience in another of the school's departments:

> Most of the people from my school were in the same department. Shortly after the program ended for me, there were some changes (administratively) made in our department that severed many of the relationships that had seem to be enhanced during the Co-op experience. Unfortunately, the upheaval had such a negative impact that the positive Co-op impact was overshadowed by the changes. The positive impact such as sharing materials, ideas, etc. dissolved. I think the influence would have lasted indefinitely if the other agenda had not occurred. (xxi)

Community of Learners

The development and function of a community of learners within the context of the actual Co-op group and extending into PDS sites was also highlighted in the data. The feeling of community was evident as respondents wrote about sharing ideas, philosophies, insights, frustrations, and successes over a sustained period of time with the same group of teachers, and Co-op Leader, and in a context of professional and personal support. While it is not possible to precisely lay out a cause and effect relationship between the Co-op's curriculum and actions taken at the PDS sites, the data suggested interesting and important links.

For many former Co-op students, the community of learners developed in the Co-op continued to function at several of the five PDS sites. The Co-op provided many elements needed to develop a community and its learners. The structural format of the Co-op lent itself to establishing a community by providing a continuous two-year graduate program for a cohort of

teachers and the university professor.

Additionally, the sequencing and inter-relationships of courses also encouraged and provided continuity in the establishment of a learning community, as one respondent observed:

> The program was planned from beginning to end and so all the classes tied to the one before and after. The classes weren't disjointed so that the assignments weren't something to be done and then forgotten. I had to do quality work because what happened in one class would effect what I did in the next class." (xvi)

This structure in and of itself may have allowed teachers the opportunity to create a community of learners. A teacher stated: "getting to know the other teachers in the Co-op was enhanced by the fact that we were going to be working together for two years, always in the same classes, always on the same level of education."(xix,2). Another teacher reported, "the Masters Co-op afforded me the opportunity to share ideas about education with other educators on a long-term, personal basis." (xix)

Teachers from both Co-ops described their relationships with fellow students as collegial and the community as supportive. This Co-op graduate described the sentiment of many of those in both Co-op groups: ". . . it was working with my peers that kept me going. Without this support I know of at least three people and possibly myself who would have dropped from the program. We needed the encouragement we received from each other to keep going."(xix) Possibly the heavy responsibilities and demands of teaching and being graduate students for two years provided the impetus for the growth of community in the Co-op. Over and over again, respondents wrote comments similar to this elementary teacher, "the fact that we all stayed together during the Masters experience gave me strength."(xx,2) One elementary teacher vividly expressed the feelings of many respondents from both groups:

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> [we] had compassion [during] times of discouragement and we were able to keep each other buoyed up. We had friendly competitions to see who could complete their papers and readings first. When our families at home became tired of the commitment we [made to] the program, our Co-op family was there to encourage and to remind us of the importance of what we were doing. They wouldn't let anyone quit before we reached our goal. (xvi,2)

The instructional format may have encouraged Co-op students to also become closer through sharing ideas, teacher to teacher. "The greatest influence I felt from the Co-op was always in the sharing of ideas and knowledge. It was in the willingness teachers had to work together." (xix,2) Another teacher remarked: "the give and take involved in this process created understanding and bonding." (V) The Co-ops became powerful. One former Co-op participant described how students joined together to state their beliefs and participate in creating their own curriculum:

> [we had] developed "voice" and [had learned] to speak out on what we felt . . . when we felt that we as a group were being required to do something which would not benefit us, we would talk to the professor and make a change as a group. This was very threatening to some [professors], but beneficial to us. By doing this we eliminated trivial, insignificant work. For example, one instructor wanted to give quizzes each week as a part of our grade. We resented being treated as juveniles and requested that more of an emphasis be placed on our research project. We felt that we were professional enough to do the readings and wanted to place more time on our project and less time studying for quizzes. This was one of the most mature ways I have ever seen to approach education. I could never have taken on an instructor myself without the Co-op to bring about a change! (xv)

Most often, however, the community came to include the Co-op Leader or university professor. "our Co-op [Leader] . . . was our sounding board and in our corner fighting for us . . . we had a special bond with [her] . . . ." (v,2) A teacher from another Co-op stated:

The sense of community and support carried over into various PDS sites. "This Co-op community created special bonds of understanding and ways of understanding the world and

successfully working the school culture". (xxii) The comments from another veteran teacher from another high school and different Co-op provided further insight:

> . . . all of the benefits seem to stem from the close professional relationships I developed with others in the program. One of the best things about teaching is the relative autonomy one has in the classroom. But sometimes that autonomy can become isolation and with that isolation, stagnation. I now feel I have a support group with which I speak the same language, face the same problems and can work our solutions to problems (problems I know now are not mine alone). (vi,2)

One respondent's comments seem to reflect the perceptions of many of her Co-op peers, when she reported, "It has had a definite influence on the way those of us at my school who went through the program together [and how we] relate to each other. This in turn has influenced the way we relate to other colleagues". (xxii)

Additionally, the Co-op seemed to provide teachers with new conceptions about the importance of teachers working together as communities, as one teacher simply stated, "My experience in the Co-op made me aware of the importance of teacher collaboration." (xxii,2) Many teachers wrote about the contrast of cultures between the community of learners apparently created among Co-op members and the realities of their teaching cultures in the schools, " . . . teaching, as you know, is isolating. The Co-op helped us to talk to teachers about classroom activities and research and readings."(xviii)

Conclusion

The positive nature of the preliminary data along with a response rate of 90% from the former Co-op/PDS participants greatly surprised the research team. In light of the fact, that most researchers are cynical by nature, the data and findings seemed particularly "happy". Although the study's findings were "happy", the data from the 23 responding Co-op students indicated that

only two former students communicated negative feelings and perceptions. However, the conclusions to Phase I of the Co-op/PDS study should be viewed in at least three major ways, including: 1) cautions, 2) further investigation, and 3) implications for professional development practices.

Cautions. While the findings of this study reveal a positive and fairly consistent picture of teachers as change agents in their classrooms and in varying degrees influencing their school and colleagues, the results should be viewed in several cautionary ways.

First, the data reflect only Phase I of at least a two part study designed to investigate the influence of the Co-op as a vehicle for professional development and school renewal. The purpose of Phase I was to examine, in broad strokes, the views of all participants associated with both PDS Co-ops so that future research decisions can be made that will include: 1) formalization of salient themes, 2) development of appropriate interview protocols and 3) identification of sampling strategies.

Second, the data are survey information based on respondents' perceptions and are not conclusive, no cause and effect relationships can be secured. The data do not allow such conclusions. While the data are revealing and the results indicated that many Co-op participants believed that program has influenced change in a variety of arenas, at this point in time, there is no substantial evidence of individual and school change. Further study is needed.

Third, the length of time elapsed between the end of the Co-op experience and the Phase I survey was four years for Co-op One students and two years for other Co-op respondents. Although it is encouraging that after an extended period of time, the former students continued to report significant changes resulting from Co-op participation, the lengthy time period also raises

questions. For example, has there been important information about the experience lost throughout the years? In what ways have the respondents developed selective memory about their experiences? What other influences were taking place in the school the could have effected the study's findings?

Although the findings of this study should be viewed with caution, yet the emerging themes and the questions they raise will be important in guiding research into Phase II Further Investigation. Five areas for further consideration emerge from the study. First, the results suggest that further examination is needed into the development of a community of learners within the Co-op format, and the resulting impact of the community on wider PDS sites, their school cultures, and renewal efforts. The findings of this study should lead the team to further investigate the various program and school components that contribute to the development of communities of learner.

Second, the pattern of school change revealed by the findings indicated a variation in the degree and type of institutional renewal. For instance, further investigation is needed to understand why the Co-op may have influenced two very similar high school English departments in very different ways, including department renewal, overall school changes, and collegial relationships.

Third, the data indicated that the program may have changed teachers' views to include roles that are more associated with "teacher as researcher", "teacher as change agent", and "teacher as community problem-solver". Further study is needed to understand the depth of these new role perceptions and the aspects of the program that may have contributed to participants' perspectives of self as teacher and member of the larger school community. Additionally, the

survey data from Phase I illuminated possible tensions created in the PDS sites when Co-op participants exert new leadership and change agent roles. Possibly, further study is needed into the dynamic intersections created in a school culture when Co-op participants/ roles as teachers change and interact with previously established norms and perceptions. Phase II of the upcoming study may need to examine the infusion of new teacher roles in traditional school settings.

Fourth, several aspects of the Co-op structure and curriculum were identified as possible elements influencing change and renewal of the teachers and their PDS sites. Specifically, the findings revealed that the examination of professional values and practices by teachers may be an influential factor in promoting changes in teachers' roles and beliefs. Moreover, the individual research or inquiry projects that lasted throughout the final year of the program should also be examined in much more depth to understand key aspects of the projects that contributed to sustained changes in classroom and school curricula as well as teacher roles.

Finally, the dominant theme was teachers as change agents. This preliminary finding was perhaps the most intriguing and surprising of the study. To verify and more fully elaborate on this idea, Phase II should investigate the reality and impact of this theme from several perspectives, including that of school administrators, fellow teachers, and the former Co-op participants.

Implications. As portrayed by the Co-op participants, the Masters' Cooperative Program was a significant aspects of the teachers' professional development. Several program features were identified as key elements in the change process. Specifically, a cohort format was salient, allowing teachers within a school to form a mini-community, and yet interact with teachers from other PDS sites. Also, the use of an inquiry-based approach across a year period of time provided teachers with the skills, encouragement, and opportunities to be reflective about their teaching

practices and schools. Some teachers came to view themselves as change agents.

These program features and Co-op teachers demonstrated in practice the principles of professional development called for by Little (1993) when she noted that educational reform will not occur until the model of professional development moves from a training inservice approach to an alternative paradigm. The Co-op exemplified many of Little's professional development principles. The Co-op had a cohort format that, offered "meaningful intellectual, social, and emotional engagement with ideas, with materials, and with colleagues . . . " (pp. 138).

Second, it helped teachers study their own personal and school histories (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995), and then stimulated them to pose questions and inquire about their own teaching. Consistent with Gitlin et al., (1992), Little (1993) recommended that for professional development to be meaningful it must "take explicit account of the contexts of teaching and the experiences of teachers . . . afford teachers a means of locating new ideas in relation to their individual and institutional histories, practices, and circumstances" (pp. 138). Third, Little stated professional development must employ the means and perspectives of inquiry which were central to the Co-op program at the PDS sites. The study's results were consistent with Little's and others (e.g., Barth, 1992, Bullough & Gitlin, 1995) pleas that inquiry "acknowledges that the existing knowledge base is relatively slim and that our strength may derive less from teachers' willingness to consume research knowledge than from the capacity to generate knowledge and to assess the knowledge claimed by others" (Little, pp.139). If Professional Development Schools are only as good as the teachers in those schools, then strategies for teacher development should promote and enhance teachers' abilities and opportunities to renew those schools.

While the Co-op was limited to a Masters degree program, the results of this study should

begin to suggest effective principles of professional development and corresponding program curricula needed to encourage sustained teacher growth and school renewal. The challenge for the teacher education community will be to establish graduate programs and other professional development packages that take advantage of several of the curricular and program elements suggested by this study.

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Attachment I

Fall 1991	**Winter 1992**	**Spring 1992**	**Summer 1992**
*Teacher's Voice	*School History	*Research Methods	*Literature Search
	Theory of Instruction/Teaching and Learning Strategies	Theories of Curriculum	[summer courses on campus]

Fall 1992	**Winter 1993**	**Spring 1993**	**Summer 1993**
*Writing the Review of the Literature	*Design and Implement Inquiry Projects	*Complete Inquiry Projects	[summer courses on campus]
Cooperative Learning	Education and Social Theory	Educational Policies	[summer courses on campus]

*courses taught by the Co-op Leader(s)

Attachment II

Co-op	Total Number of Students	Students From The PDS Sites	Elemen. School Teachers (gender)	Secondary School Teachers (gender)	Years of Teaching Exper. (range)	Member of Site Steering Comm. or Cooper. Teacher?
One	28	20	11 (1 male)	9 (3 male)	17.6 (7-29)	18
Two	18	7	0	7 (1 male)	22.4 (17-26)	4